

Enabling Affirmative Futures: Making Use of Virtual Spaces and New Social Technologies in Co-Production Research with Marginalised Young People

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Abstract : In this paper, we detail the politics and practicalities of co-produced disability research with disabled young people with life-limiting and life-threatening impairments in our ESRC funded project, Life, Death, Disability and the Human: Living Life to the Fullest. We centre our Co-Researcher Collective of disabled young people who, through virtual research methods and social technologies, are co-leading this innovative project exploring the lives, hopes, desires and ambitions of young disabled people living short(er) lives. Co-production is an established approach; however, our co-researchers have led us to develop inclusive and transformative research practices that engage with online social research methods in innovative ways. Through this discussion, we demarcate the Academy and 'research process' as potentially deeply ableist spaces that propagate the normative researcher as non-disabled; someone integrated into the Academy and insecure employment; and who enacts normative modes of leadership. We use our experiences of co-production in Living Life to the Fullest, then, to show that research - as a discipline, a set of politics, and scholarly practice - must be transformed in order to enable new inclusive research futures that support meaningful co-production with marginalised young people. In conclusion, as we detail our experiences, we aim to encourage disability studies researchers and others to adopt virtual environments and social technologies when researching with and for the lives of disabled people.

Keywords : co-production, illness, youth, technology

Conference Title : ICDS 2019 : International Conference on Disability Studies

Conference Location : Vancouver, Canada

Conference Dates : August 07-08, 2019